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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [OSCE](#) [AM](#)
SUBJECT: ODIHR MISSION HEAD DISCUSSES PRE-ELECTION
ENVIRONMENT, DELEGATION CONCERNS

Classified By: CDA A.F. Godfrey, Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) CDA met May 2 with Ambassador Boris Frlec, the head of OSCE/ODIHR's Election Observation Mission (EOM) for a discussion on the pre-election period in Armenia. Frlec evaluated the pre-election period as broadly competitive, despite flaws. He saw a relatively even playing field, albeit where limits on campaign finance are unfortunately not applied, and highlighted the lack of serious problems with freedom of assembly or access to media as a positive indicator.

12. (C) Frlec expressed concerned about the public release of the clandestine recording of Artur Baghdassarian with British DCM Hyde and about the President's subsequent labeling of Baghdassarian in a speech April 27 as a traitor. Frlec said that Kocharian's office has intensely scrutinized the EOM's Reporting. He said the EOM had recently drafted its third interim report and sent it to Warsaw to be released on Friday, May 4. He commented the report had been tough to write, especially in its very careful description of the Baghdassarian incident, but the end product reflected the genuine consensus within the EOM cadre. He wished the GOAM would "stop being so paranoid" and just let the process play out. He felt that Armenia now has a robust election system that it has put in place with foreign help.

13. (C) Frlec expressed concern about how he will manage the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA) delegation when it arrives, as he is well aware of ongoing bureaucratic turf battles between the PA and ODIHR. He expects that Armenia will become a bureaucratic battleground for this intramural tussle. To complicate matters further, he noted that the Russians are "packing" the PA delegation with at least 15 Russian Duma members, in addition to the naturally Russian-weighted CIS Observer Mission. (NOTE: There will be 30 Russian STOs in the OSCE EOM, joining the three Russian LTOs already working in Frlec's mission. Rounding out the field of international election monitors will be observer missions from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the European Parliament. END NOTE)

14. (C) Frlec said that he is required to attempt coordination of statements with the various other delegations but foresaw some undesirable scenarios. The worst case would be "Belgrade all over again" if the OSCE PA made an overly positive public statement before the EOM released its own statement. Second worst would involve Frlec having to water down any criticism from the EOM statement in "coordination" negotiations with a Russian-influenced PA statement.

15. (C) COMMENT: Frlec is an ideal team leader for this

group, and we have confidence in his ability to successfully maneuver the politics in the run-up to Election Day.
GODFREY